

**Remarks by Senator Patty Murray
Introducing Spokane Tribal Chairman Warren Seyler**

October 1, 2003

Good morning, Mr. Chairman, and thank you for this opportunity. I'm proud to introduce to the Committee the distinguished chairman of the Spokane Tribal Business Council, Chairman Warren Seyler. He's a leading figure in Washington's tribal communities, and I know his testimony will be of great value to this committee.

Before I introduce him, I'd like to share a few ideas about S. 1438. Earlier this year, I joined with Senators Cantwell and Inouye in offering legislation that would finally compensate the Spokane Tribe for its contribution to the hydropower that is generated by the Grand Coulee Dam.

Some of you will recall that I introduced similar legislation in the 106th and 107th Congresses.

The Grand Coulee Dam is the largest electricity producer in the United States. It provides electricity and water to the Columbia Basin Project, which is one of the world's largest irrigation projects. For more than 60 years, the Grand Coulee has been the backbone of the Northwest's federal power grid and our agricultural economy.

But for the Native peoples of this region, construction of the Grand Coulee Dam came at a very high price. For the Spokane Tribe in particular, it brought an end to a way of life.

The Spokane River was once a free-flowing waterway that supported plentiful salmon runs. It became a barren stretch of slack water that now erodes the southern lands of the reservation. In fact, the Tribe's reservation has been flooded on two sides.

Mr. Chairman, S. 1438 is not the first piece of legislation seeking to compensate a Tribe for losses brought by construction of the Grand Coulee Dam. In 1994, Congress passed similar settlement legislation to compensate the neighboring Confederated Colville Tribes.

Since the 1970s, the Congress and federal agencies have indicated that both the Colville and Spokane Tribes should be compensated for their losses. This legislation will provide a long overdue settlement to the Spokane Tribe.

Mr. Chairman, it is now my pleasure to introduce Chairman Seyler to the Committee. First elected to the Spokane Tribal Business Council in 1990, Chairman Seyler also serves on the board of the Upper Columbia United Tribes, which is involved in fish and management issues along the Columbia River. He is also active in management issues at Lake Roosevelt, a reservoir created when the Grand Coulee Dam was constructed.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, I'd like to offer my condolences to the Spokane Tribe. Last week the Tribe -- and indeed all of Indian Country -- suffered a great loss with the passing of former Chairman Bruce Wynne. Bruce led with his heart and had a remarkable ability to bridge generations. His leadership, knowledge of history, and warm personality will be missed, but his legacy continues in leaders like Chairman Seyler.

Thank you.